Heritage 1066's Root Person – An Anchor Point

By John L. R. Guest, 27th February, 2026

Why a nominee zero participant is important in an ascending genealogical trace using traditional scientific research method and its link to helping understand the connection of DNA cousins to the zero participant.

From humble research beginnings

John and Liz Guest began reconciling their family's records using a small collection of artifacts inherited from their parents and grandparents during the 1980s and 90s. Around 2001, they were able to delve deeper into the Guest lineage with the aid of a "gateway" document. As they reflected on their journey, John and Liz were eager to restore the family heritage and make it accessible in a centralised manner for future generations, both direct and collateral. initiated by Liz led John to embark on a comprehensive exploration of ancestry, with as the primary focus or "zero participant" for the Guest paternal and maternal history beyond the shores of Australia to the people and places of origin. Liz did the same for her longest late line, the Slocombe, in England.

John L. R. Guest as the root person

As Heritage 1066's "nominee zero" participant (often referred to as a root person, proband, or the starting individual) is essential in an ascending genealogical trace because they serve as the verified anchor point from which all ancestors are identified, tested, and documented, ensuring accuracy and providing a baseline for comparing genetic cousins.

In the scientific method of genealogy, this individual—or a specific, known ancestor in their direct line—provides the necessary context to confirm, through DNA, that matches are not coincidental but share a documented, common ancestor.

Importance of Nominee Zero in Ascending Genealogical Trace

- **Establishing the Baseline:** Ascending genealogy works backward from the present. The nominee zero (e.g., you or a known relative) provides the initial, trusted data set of vital records (birth, marriage, death) for the current generation.
- **Verification of Lineage:** Every subsequent ancestor in an ascending trace requires validation. Using a specific nominee zero allows the researcher to apply scientific, evidence-based methods to verify each step, rather than relying on assumed relationships.
- **Preventing "Drift":** Without a clear anchor, research can easily move to incorrect, same-named individuals in previous generations. A "zero" participant keeps the investigation focused on one specific, validated line.
- **Directing Genetic Testing:** DNA, particularly Y-DNA or mtDNA, must be tracked through specific, known lines to be effective. The nominee zero identifies which ancestor's DNA is being traced back, enabling targeted testing of descendants to confirm the pedigree.

Link to Understanding DNA Cousins

- **Validating Shared Ancestry:** When a DNA match (a "cousin") appears, they often seem to come from nowhere. By mapping the DNA match against the family tree of the nominee zero, the researcher can identify the exact Most Recent Common Ancestor (MRCA).
- **Calculating Specific Relationships:** The amount of shared DNA (centimorgans, or cM) only suggests a relationship (e.g., 3rd-4th cousin). The nominee zero's documented, traditional tree allows researchers to convert that, for example, into "we are both descendants of John Smith and Mary Jones, born 1800".
- **Using DNA to Break "Brick Walls":** If the traditional paper trail for the nominee zero hits a "brick wall" (cannot find parents), DNA matches to descendants of suspected parents can bridge that gap, essentially extending the tree.
- **Triangulation:** If multiple DNA cousins match the nominee zero, they likely all descend from the same ancestor. The nominee zero helps pinpoint exactly which ancestor in their tree is shared, as described in WATO (What Are the Odds) methods.

Professional consultation

Turi Emma King is a Professor and the Director of the Milner Centre for Evolution at the University of Bath. She was formerly a Professor of Public Engagement and Genetics at the University of Leicester. Professor King played a pivotal role in the DNA verification process during the exhumation and reburial of Richard III of England. She was in advising that the small DNA thread shared John and Richard III came from someone before Richard and was not passed down through a male-to-male line or a female-to-female direct line, but from a mixed male and female lineage.

This made perfect sense and led Turi to conduct a deeper ancestral trace, with expert genealogists at the College of Arms that the shared lineal ancestor with Richard III was I and his wife, Eleanor of Castile. It is from Eleanor that John inherits his 2% "Spanish" ethnicity, best explained as Mediterranean without a political boundary. The vetted lineage of John and his cousins, Darren Halifax and Dennis Lillee, who are John's collaborators and co-petitioners to the Crown and the College of Arms, is part of a long-term collaborative project supported by the King's Office. Darren and Dennis, along with their close blood relatives—Matheson Powell, Wherry, Hay, Small, Paul, and Hanley— also descendants of Edward and Eleanor.

Coincidentally, John's distant paternal cousin, Ivor Guest of Wimborne, England, is also involved in the general project and is a direct lineal ancestor of Edward and Elizabeth on the alternative Guest-Bertie line.

In Summary

The nominee zero participant acts as the "root" for both the paper trail and the genetic profile. They provide the necessary context to turn a list of anonymous DNA matches into a structured, verified, and understood family tree.

Bibliography

1. Alice Hoyt Veen (2018). “It’s a Numbers Game.” Understanding Recognized Genealogical Formats Board for Certification of Genealogists. 17 July 2018.

2. The Impact of Genetic Genealogy on Family History Research (2026). Explore how genetic genealogy transforms family history research, connects you to relatives, and uncovers hidden roots through DNA testing. Genomelink.

3. If an ancestry test says someone is my cousin, what other possible relationships could we have? Tech Interactive. December 16, 2014.

4. Using DNA to Search for Relatives (2026). Vanish. Online: Vanish.org.au.